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# JOURNAL OF EDUCATIONAL SOCIOLOGY

## THE MOTION PICTURE IN ITS EDUCATIONAL AND SOCIAL ASPECTS

FREDERIC M. THRASHER, Editor

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**NOVEMBER 1936** 

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THE JOURNAL is published by The Journal of Educational Sociology, Inc., monthly from September to May, inclusive. Publication and business office, Room 41, 26 Washington Place, New York, N. Y. Editorial office, Room 42, Press Building, New York University, 32 Washington Place, New York City.

The subscription price is \$3.00 per year; the price of single copies is 35 cents. Orders for less than half a year will be charged at the single-copy rate.

Entered as second-class matter September 27, 1934, at the Post Office at New York, N. Y., under the Act of March 3, 1879.

The contents of previous issues of THE JOURNAL OF EDUCATIONAL SOCIOLOGY may be found by consulting the Education Index or the Public Affairs Information Service.

PRINTED IN U. S. A.





## The JOURNAL of EDUCATIONAL SOCIOLOGY

A Magazine of Theory and Practice

VOL. 10

NOVEMBER 1936

No. 3

#### THE MOTION PICTURE: ITS NATURE AND SCOPE

FREDERIC M. THRASHER

Associate Professor of Education, New York University Technical Director, Metropolitan Motion Picture Council

The motion picture holds great interest for the sociologist because its social implications extend into so many and such varied fields. To understand its educational and sociological significance, however, one must consider the nature of the art which it represents.

The motion picture as an art form has had an amazing history during the short period of its development. Yet the question has been raised as to whether it is an art at all or merely an industry. A leading New York exhibitor, Howard S. Cullman, has advanced the hypothesis that the motion picture is manufactured primarily for entertainment which will sell to a large public of a not-too-high grade intelligence and that it cannot be seriousy considered as art. Leading motion-picture critics, on the other hand, such as Iris Barry, Curator of the Museum of Modern Art Film Library, and Julien Levy of the Levy Art Galleries, believe that the motion picture at its best is a form of creative expression which takes its place in the family of the fine arts.

No matter how the motion picture may be exploited in the entertainment field, however, it cannot be gainsaid that it has developed from crude beginnings to a high degree of technical perfection of photography and direction in Hollywood and in other film130

producing centers of the world. It does present a medium that, unhindered, lends itself admirably to the creative impulse. The motion picture of the silent days achieved a high state of perfection in the field of pantomime. With the coming of sound there was a period of confusion until the new and added technique had been mastered. Sound and dialogue, originally exploited for their novelty, have come gradually to occupy their place in proper perspective. The advent of color has introduced a new problem, but it is likely that color also will be subordinated eventually to the purpose of obtaining a total effect and will become merely an additional tool of the director, who as the major artist synthesizes the various materials of the cinema as he conceives it.

It is certain that motion pictures may make a unique contribution to art that cannot be made in any other medium of human expression. The essence of cinematic art lies in the fluidity and untrammeled movement of the materials which it presents. While it is true that action is presented on the stage of the legitimate theater, such action is hampered by the demands of time and space. The cinema, on the other hand, is unrestricted either by time or space; it has a tremendous advantage in being able to move the spectator with the camera and so the artist can paint his picture upon the screen with epic sweeps of the brush and with a perspective denied the legitimate drama. Rapidity of movement through space, vastness of scene, penetration of the earth, the sea, and the sky, human drama in heroic proportions are possible and can be effectively accomplished by the combined arts of the cinema. But the creative imagination does not stop here. It is possible in the cinema to transcend the material into realms of fantasy which other forms of art find it much more difficult to present. While it is true that ghosts can be shown on the stage, the illusion is much less perfect. In motion pictures "the ghost goes west" and he may even be shipped along with his castle in a transatlantic liner without destroying the illusion. The stage cannot present a drama of "the invisible man." In motion pictures a man can leave his body and travel far afield over the earth or into a land of dreams. Psychological effects and subtle changes in atmosphere can be created more effectively and with less difficulty than in literature, painting, and the legitimate drama, provided of course that the director is a real artist. Even "the secrets of the soul" can be bared and "the mechanics of the brain" elucidated.

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One of the most interesting fields, which is peculiarly the province of the motion picture, is that of animation. The animated cartoon is universally popular because of the ease with which the imagination of the artist is given free reign to carry his audience into the utmost realms of fancy and absurdity. Yet animation owes much of its delightful appeal to the vividness with which it depicts the common elements of human nature and the foibles of mankind, whether under the guise of household pets, barnyard animals, or inanimate objects which are given a chance to express themselves.

The cinematic qualities to which I have referred above are well illustrated in a variety of films of many nations. Rapid movement through space, which has been called *pure cinema* because it can only be presented so effectively in the motion picture, is well exemplified in the American "western" with its splendid horses galloping headlong over mountains and across the plains, with its stage-coaches and trains rushing madly along in adventurous settings, with its Indians on the warpath, and its "broncho-busting" and "steer-roping" cowboys, and with its mass movements of bison, sheep, cattle, and horses. Out of the earlier "westerns" have come such epics as *The Iron Horse, The Covered Wagon*, and *Cimarron*, which have presented in heroic fashion the mass movements of people in the settling of the West.

Other illustrations of qualities which have enabled the cinema to distinguish itself from other art forms may be cited: the fast-moving legions of the Ku Klux Klan in *The Birth of a Nation;* the broad canvas and the sweeping movement of the lancers in *Lives of a Bengal Lancer;* the heroic charges of men and horses in the Rus-

sian Chapayev; the Indian battles of The Texas Rangers and The Last of the Mohicans; warfare, new and old, on land and on sea, in innumerable films, topped by Thunder in the East (formerly called "The Battle") and All Quiet on the Western Front; the horse race as presented in many pictures and notably in Frank Capra's Broadway Bill; the massacre on the great staircase in the Russian Potemkin, a masterpiece of cinematic art; the fluid images and psychological atmosphere of John Ford's The Informer, universally acclaimed as the best picture of 1935; the handling of crowds and mobs in such pictures as Tale of Two Cities and Fury, and in many Russian pictures; the odysseys of ships in such films as those of Alan Villiers and Mutiny on the Bounty, Treasure Island, and other photoplays with innumerable storms at sea; the conquest of the sky exemplified in an endless cycle of airplane pictures, representing activity of a scope impossible of such realistic presentation in any other form of art; and the vast booming of the sea in Man of Aran, the best picture of 1934. All these pictures have elements in them which no other form of art can catch and transmit, elements which represent the peculiar province of the motion picture.

In the upper reaches of cinematic art we have the work of the avant-garde in Europe and the so-called "abstract film," exemplified in such experimental works as The Fall of the House of Usher and Lot in Sodom. Then we have such enigmas as Jean Cocteau's The Blood of a Poet, impenetrable to the common mind, and a number of surrealistic films produced for the most part in France. Certain classic films stand out in the history of the motion picture as representing definite qualities or trends; viz., Shattered represents the trend toward realism, while The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari, a stylistic masterpiece, has had a profound influence in the development of fantasy. The Passion of Jeanne d'Arc, among other things, stands for the development of the close-up and the interpretation of past history without attempting its literal reënactment.

Another technique of the motion picture, which gives it an added advantage over other and more static forms of art, is what is commonly known among technicians as montage, the art of contrasting images and moods upon the screen. No stage drama, no literature, no painting, no sculpture-perhaps only music-can rival the cinema in the reproduction of a rapid succession of contrasting images which are capable of presenting so much meaning to the human mind in such short space. The Russians were past masters in the use of montage, and the whole cinematic world has followed them. In some cases these contrasting images are fluid, flow into each other in beautiful melting dissolves as in Lot in Sodom; in others they are staccato as in Metropolis. The economy of these fleeting, momentary images is great in telling a story or creating a mood because they act as symbols rooted in common experience (collective representations), quickly grasped by the human mind and effective in creating a totality of impression.

With these brief and sketchy observations on the nature of the cinema as an art, we turn to the scope of the motion picture.

Paul Rotha in his beautifully illustrated book (reviewed elsewhere in this issue), *Movie Parade*, has classified the films under the following categories:

#### I. Films of Fiction

- Adventure and melodrama
   Early films and serials
   Westerns
   Crime and gangster
- Adventure in distant lands
  2. Comedy
  Slapstick
  Comedy of manners
  Satire
- 3. Romance

Modern Costume

Musical

- 4. Historical and chronicle
- 5. Fantasy

Folk tales and sagas

Prophecy Macabre

6. Drama

Personal stories Sociological

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup>Paul Rotha, Movie Parade (London: The Studio, Ltd., 1936).

7. Epic
II. Films of Fact

- Newsreel, record, and magazine
- 2. Travel films

3. Instructional films

4. Documentary

III. Avant-Garde and Trick Films

1. Avant-garde

2. Trick films

While this classification must be altered for educational and sociological purposes, it does present an interesting conception of the scope of motion pictures from the standpoint of the cinema critic and historian, and it reveals the widely diverse fields in which motion-picture production is active.

The social and educational significance even of the films of fiction listed in the various categories above is very great. These pictures are seen by from 75,000,000 to 100,000,000 people weekly in the United States alone and the weekly world audience has been estimated at 250,000,000 people. The entertainment film is unquestionably one of the greatest educational and social influences of modern times. This has been demonstrated by the Payne Fund researches carried on under the auspices of the Motion Picture Research Council. These studies have indicated the profound effect of the entertainment film on the knowledge content, the emotions, the social attitudes, and the behavior of children. Yet educators have been slow to grasp the implications of these findings and to relate the theater-shown film to curricular and extracurricular activities.

Recently certain movements have got under way which give promise that the schools may finally awaken to these responsibilities and opportunities. These movements are of two types: (1) to introduce motion-picture appreciation into the curriculum and (2) to develop extracurricular activities capitalizing the interest of the pupil in the theater-shown film.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> Published by the Macmillan Company, New York, in a series of volumes under the general caption, *Motion Pictures and Youth: The Payne Fund Studies*, W. W. Charters, Chairman. The best summary of the results of the studies is W. W. Charters's brief monograph, Motion Pictures and Youth: A Summary (paper backs) (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1936).

The movement for photoplay appreciation as a regular part of the curriculum has been given impetus by the interest of the Committee on Photoplay Appreciation of the National Council of the Teachers of English, and more recently by the activities of the Motion Picture Committee of the Department of Secondary Education of the National Education Association, under the Chairmanship of William Lewin, author of Photoplay Appreciation in American High Schools.8 Many secondary schools in the United States are now introducing regular units on photoplay appreciation in their English classes. To provide study material for these units a series of Educational and Recreational Guides' are being published regularly as new photoplays of special interest in the fields of literature, history, geography, science, and other school subjects are released. Guides already published have dealt with such productions as Romeo and Juliet, Tale of Two Cities, Mutiny on the Bounty, Midsummer Night's Dream, The Perfect Tribute, Anna Karenina, etc. Forthcoming guides will discuss such pictures as Marie Antoinette, The Good Earth, The Forty Days of Musa Dagh, Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea, etc.5 The pupils are encouraged to read the books before seeing the photoplays and in this way their interest in schoolwork is motivated by their universal enthusiasm for motion pictures and they are taught to appreciate and patronize photoplays which are socially and artistically adequate.

The second important movement in which educators are seeking to capitalize the interest of children in theater-shown films is represented in the development of school photoplay clubs. These

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>8</sup> Published as English Monograph No. 2 by the National Council of the Teachers of English, 212 West 68th Street, Chicago, Illinois, 1934.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup>Published by Educational and Recreational Guides, Inc., 125 Lincoln Avenue, Newark, New Jersey.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>6</sup> Among the forthcoming pictures which are of particular interest in this connection are: Tom Sawyer, Anthony Adverse, Captains Courageous, Camille, Charge of the Light Brigade, Come and Get It (Edna Ferber), Danton, Dodsworth, Garden of Allah (all color), Green Pastures, Joan of Arc, Kim, Last of the Mohicans, Lost Horizon, Madame Curie, Maid of Salem, The Plainsman, Rembrandt, The Prince and the Pauper, Ramona (all color), Valley Forge, and Winterset.

clubs take many names such as the Hamilton Reviewers, the McKee Junior Motion Picture Council, the Textile Moviegoers, the Central Photoplay Club, the Lincoln Cinema Club, etc. Successful clubs are carried on in grade as well as high schools. Their activities are many and varied but in general they tend to emphasize either reviewing, discussing, and rating pictures, or making their own motion pictures on 16 mm. films. Some clubs combine both activities, and the organization and program of one of these groups are described as follows by two students, Robert Marsolini, the club's president, and Irving Limkov, vice-president:

The Photoplay Club of Central High School, under the faculty sponsorship of Alexander B. Lewis' of the English department, focuses the members' attention on motion pictures as a social influence and sets in motion forces that will permanently improve the quality of entertainment and education which it provides. It aims to accomplish this in two ways: (1) to encourage film appreciation, (2) to promote the knowledge

of film-making, thus to foster a hobby.

To encourage the film appreciation, discussion periods are held every Monday. At this meeting interesting films are talked about and criticized. The fact that a picture has been acclaimed by the critics or has won a national award does not mean that it passes the judgment of the members of the Photoplay Club. Each Friday ten members are chosen to go to the Branford Theater, and they are given a printed blank on which to record their judgment of the pictures. These blanks are also used at the discussion meetings.

In order to promote film-making, all work in photography, editing, and titling is done by the members of the Club. Every department in the school is benefiting by the Photoplay Club because the resources of all

departments are utilized in picture making.

The Club has joined several organizations which are of great importance and help to it. The Amateur Cinema League provides the Club with

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>6</sup> For example, in Public School 217, Brooklyn, New York. Details with regard to the operation of this and other school clubs will be sent by the writer. Address Frederic M. Thrasher, Technical Director, Metropolitan Motion Picture Council, 100 Washington Square East, New York, N. Y.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>7</sup> Alexander B. Lewis and John A. Deady, technical adviser of the Central High School Photoplay Club, have described the work of the club more fully in an article, "The Camera in School," *Movie Makers* magazine, September 1936, p. 381 ff.

technical knowledge. New ideas in splicing, editing, and also photography which are of great advantage to the Club are sent by the League.

The National Board of Review of Motion Pictures furnishes the Club with information about latest pictures released. This report criticizes and grades the pictures into three groups; namely, pictures for juveniles, adults, and the entire family. This statement also aids the members to state their opinions at the discussion meetings. It is indeed a very valuable thing to be affiliated as a 4-Star Club with the National Board of Review. We have called on this organization a number of times for advice and have always been generously helped.

have always been generously helped.

In the activity section of our Photoplay Club, a difference of interest was found to exist between the male and female members. The boys were interested almost entirely in the production of a film, while the girls, though interested in production, tended to lean toward the appreciation of a picture. Therefore, a plan was formed whereby all boys were assigned to technical work while girls were given the opportunity to preview pictures at local theaters. However, there were some who liked to do both, so to them the privileges were widened to include other than their allotted activities. Consequently no one was doing something he did not enjoy participating in. In the filming of a picture, a suitable plot had to be found; therefore, a scenario committee was appointed to find the ideal story without too much dialogue. Incidentally, our scenario committee has written a story about safe driving and walking, which when completed will be shown in secondary schools of New Jersey.

After the scenario is finished, the necessary actors and actresses are selected and then the story is filmed. However, our best work to date has been our picture for the Welfare Federation's drive for funds during the Community Chest period. The film was finished only after much work, sometimes the boys working until ten and eleven at night. When completed, the picture was presented to the Federation in the Mosque Theater where it was viewed by some three thousand workers of the organization, among whom was the Mayor of Newark. The film was enthusiastically received and warmly praised by all. In addition to organized stories, newsreels, football games, and open-air exercises are photo-

graphed and presented to the students at general assemblies.

The members make their own titles and have made their own editing board. Three of the members recently completed a "dolly" which is used by the photographer when he wishes to move toward the subject being shot. The boys study angles for shots, learn how to run the projector successfully, and operate a stereopticon. Editing is taught to all by the older members.

The girls, of course, partake in some of this work, but usually care more for making scrapbooks, retelling plots at discussion meetings, studying professional costuming, and comparing their score sheets with news-

paper criticisms.

When it is all summarized, the work of such a club is interesting, educational, constructive, and fertilizes the good taste and the ability to select films, besides aiding in the broadening of the student's powers of judgment and bringing out hidden qualities that otherwise would have been lost.

A large number of school photoplay clubs throughout the United States have become affiliated in a National Organization of 4-Star Clubs.

The affiliated clubs receive the monthly bulletin, 4-Star Final, with news from other clubs functioning throughout the country, a short digest of the best pictures of the month, suggested projects for club work, contests, and fan news. Arrangements have been made for special 4-Star subscription rates to magazines which would be helpful in club work, as well as arrangements for club-sponsored showings of foreign-language films (with which the school foreign-language clubs are invited to coöperate), unusual films not generally shown in commercial theaters, important pictures of the past, etc., which the clubs find interesting as well as beneficial. A national "make your own movies" contest is being developed and all help possible as well as suggestions will be given to clubs who enter. Scholastic Magazine, a national high-school weekly, will carry 4-Star Club news from time to time and also outstanding reviews of pictures by members of the affiliated clubs.

Many of the photoplays seen have moral lessons in them that may well be discussed by students with their teachers and thus made the basis of character-education projects. This possibility has been sensed by educators from time to time and a few years ago there was

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>8</sup> For full details about how to organize a photoplay club and how to become affiliated with this national organization, write to Miss Patricia Hagan, National Association of 4-Star Clubs, 70 Fifth Avenue, New York, N. Y.

formed the Committee on Social Values in Motion Pictures.9 Working with the cooperation of the Motion Picture Producers and Distributors of America, the Committee finally developed a program of excerpting incidents or life situations from successful feature films which would serve "as a basis for fruitful discussion" by teachers and pupils. The Committee made its first survey in 1929, formulated its program in 1931, and began its experiments in 1933. It has now developed a series of short excerpts from the following feature films, which are being released under the general title, "Secrets of Success": Huckleberry Finn, Broken Lullaby, Sign of the Cross, Cradle Song, Skippy, Sooky, Tom Sawyer, Tom Brown of Culver, Lucky Dog, Alias the Doctor, Wednesday's Child, There's Always Tomorrow, Her Sweetheart, Young America, Gentlemen Are Born, No Greater Glory, The Band Plays On, and One Night of Love. Some of the moral values which the pupils are expected to develop through discussion under teacher guidance are: social democracy, responsibility for peace, unselfishness, meaning of friendship, mutual understanding between parents and children, satisfactions in work well done, patriotism, kindness to animals, dynamic purpose in life, bad effects of divorce on life of child, mutual obligations necessary in family life, loyalty, intelligent respect for law, fortitude in the face of adversity, reliability, cooperation, and the necessity for long and painstaking preparation for the tasks of life. Many of these episodes are useful for adults as well as for children. Teachers' manuals, discussion outlines, and posters for each episode are available for use in connection with the showing of the pictures.10

The possibilities of utilizing theater-shown or entertainment films in social-science teaching have hardly been realized by educators. Many such films have a definite social message or are valuable in

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>8</sup> The Committee is composed of Dean Howard M. LeSourd, Boston University Graduate School, *chairman*; Florence Hale, Editor, *Grade Teacher*; Mark A. May, Institute of Human Relations, Yale University; Frank N. Freeman, Professor of Psychology, University of Chicago; and Miriam Van Waters, author of *Youth in Conflict*.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>10</sup> Full information may be obtained from the Committee on Social Values in Motion Pictures, Dean Howard M. LeSourd, *Chairman*, Boston University, Boston, Mass.

explaining social problems to children. Many entertainment films include authoritative incidental materials of value. The motion picture is important to the social-science teacher in elucidating social processes which are difficult to present through the printed or spoken word. The photoplay has an added advantage of being able to evoke appropriate emotional responses which will reinforce attitudes necessary to enlightened and useful citizenship. Such a film as Fury is an excellent "document" on the formation and behavior of mobs. Many films previously produced dealing with various aspects of the causes, treatment, and prevention of delinquency and crime would make excellent material for classroom discussion. Among them are The Road to Life, Wild Boys of the Road, The Mayor of Hell, Parole, Don't Turn 'Em Loose, The Big House, Crime and Punishment, I Am a Fugitive from a Chain Gang (one of the finest films ever made), Jail Break, Road Gang, and many others including The Devil Is a Sissy, one of the best "kid" films yet to be made and one which presents an excellent picture of the juvenile court.

Very valuable for social-science classes are the theater-shown episodes of the March of Time, which deal with a great variety of current problems. The March of Time presentations on the screen, which are seen by about 15,000,000 people every month in more than 6,614 theatres in America and abroad, occupy only four hours of screen time every year; yet their influence upon public opinion is tremendous. The March of Time publishes each month a Teachers' Manual which points out not only the direct and positive value that the March of Time episodes have as factual material in the social-studies and current-events classrooms, but indicates as well the way in which these episodes can be correlated with the work in English, in art, and in other subjects. A monthly *Photo Reporter* is also published for students in these classes and this contains a variety of interesting supplementary material.

Since the entertainment film has such an enormous weekly au-

dience in this country and such a profound effect upon the minds of both children and adults it is important that its content and the way in which its subject matter is presented be of such quality as to promote the objectives of education for wholesome citizenship. There have been many types of attack on this problem and of these the most unsound psychologically and sociologically is undoubtedly legal censorship. Space is lacking for the discussion of this important problem, except to point out that there is a better, although a slower, way to control the content and artistic quality of pictures. This is through education of the public and of children and young people in motion-picture appreciation so that they will "shop around" for their pictures and patronize only pictures representing a high standard of entertainment and art. Such increased patronage for good pictures will register at the box office and the producers will be encouraged to make more and more pictures of a superior quality.

The schools are doing a little along these lines through courses in motion-picture appreciation and in photoplay clubs, but they have not realized their great opportunities for instructing children as to the nature of good pictures and calling the attention of children to superior photoplays being shown currently in the theaters. The library has done a great deal more in this latter field than the public schools. The Cleveland Public Library, for example, issues a great variety of bookmarks to its readers, each bookmark devoted to a forthcoming production of merit and each presenting a series of books that may be read with profit in connection with the picture in question. The library also presents an interesting series of exhibits in connection with worth-while pictures."

A number of organizations of varied types preview, classify, and rate films and in this way take an important part in public education and guidance in the selection of pictures and in building up support for worth-while films at the box office. The most important of these

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>11</sup> Books and Films is a monthly publication devoted to library-film coöperation edited by Ina Roberts and Anthony Belle of the Cleveland Public Library, 11,118 Clifton Boulevard, Cleveland, Ohio.

groups is the National Board of Review of Motion Pictures, whose long service in the field and in fighting legal censorship is outstanding. The work and organization of the Board are described elsewhere in this issue. Other organizations which select and endorse films are the National League for Decency, the East and West Coast Previews, the Indiana Endorsers of Motion Pictures, and various magazines which recommend certain films which they regard as suitable for their particular clienteles. It should be pointed out that these ratings of pictures, like the film reviews of motion-picture critics, are value-judgments which cannot escape a high degree of subjectivity on the part of the reviewers and which inevitably reflect the diverse personal experiences and varied cultural backgrounds of those who pass judgment.

The uses of motion pictures for other purposes than entertainment are many and varied and include almost every field of human knowledge and endeavor; science, education, religion, journalism, art, and industry. In this issue of The Journal, however, we are interested primarily in the educational uses of the motion picture. The use of the cinema for strictly instructional purposes in the school itself rather than in the theater represents a vast field in education which has been developed only to a very limited extent. Elsewhere in this issue are described some of the problems of the development of instructional films and their introduction into the public schools. It is also important to emphasize the great value of the motion picture for special educational purposes, such as in the fields of safety, health, social hygiene, medicine, industry, etc.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>18</sup> It is expected that a later issue of The JOURNAL will deal with other educational and social aspects of the motion picture, the treatment of which has been limited here because of lack of space.

#### THE EDUCATIONAL TALKING PICTURE

V. C. ARNSPIGER

Director of Research, Erpi Picture Consultants

The success of the effort to solve our problems of educational administration depends largely upon the adequacy of our approach. We see evidences on all sides of attempts to develop curricula, to organize administrative programs, to develop teacher improvement movements, to set up child accounting, without a fundamental understanding of major problems or ultimate functions.

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In the consideration of the program of audio-visual instruction we must begin with the question "What is the function of an audiovisual program?"

The earliest human being was faced with the necessity for passing down the heritage of the race. This was done largely by precept and example, but the development of language helped immeasurably. The expansion of this knowledge from the local community to the outside world necessitated the use of drawings to supplement spoken language. The development of written language was a tremendous step forward but even more important was the coming of the printing press which made possible the wide dissemination of knowledge throughout the civilized world. The telescope added other planets to our heritage and the microscope opened up an immense world hitherto unknown.

To the early school's use of these implements of learning science added the photographic likeness which approached still nearer to reality. Within the present century, science has made available to schools the moving photograph or motion picture which overcame many restrictions of time and space inherent in former methods of presenting subject matter. During the past decade this striving for a more nearly perfect method of reproducing life situations produced the talking picture.

What was the motivating drive behind all this history? Simply

this—to present and interpret subject matter chosen from the heritage of the race to be communicated to the new generation in a more effective manner.

The development of the educational program since the beginning of time has been a history of the effort to overcome limitations to learning inherent in the mediums of communication available. The function of the film in the light of history, therefore, stands out bright and clear: Its main purpose is to assist in overcoming limitations which have hampered the cultural program of the individual.

What are these limitations to learning? I shall suggest a few.

1. When the situation to be presented is so intermingled with or surrounded by an environment as to render it obscure or meaningless

When interrelated situations are so completely separated by time or space as to render their relationships obscure

3. When great masses of data are involved

4. When movements in nature are too slow or too rapid, too small, or too far distant to be perceived by the unaided human senses

5. When the learner is confused by verbalism; for example, I use the term "protective tariff" which evokes mental images which are the product of backgrounds of experience which obviously are not common and, therefore, this term is used without any real foundation for understanding on the part of students

Our progress in overcoming these and other limitations in the different areas of subject matter varies tremendously. In the natural sciences our general level of understanding is very high, while in the social area we have not been able, by means of traditional methods, to present in the social-studies classroom, in a laboratory demonstration, life situations so important to an understanding of social phenomena. Now, if by means of the film we can reproduce life situations in the classroom in natural sequences we shall overcome one limitation which retards general social understanding.

The development of the curriculum has been greatly retarded by our inability to present certain fundamental concepts in almost every subject-matter area. In general we have come so to depend upon the printed word for communicating ideas that the development of the curriculum has been seriously restricted. Proposals for adding concepts to the course of study have met with the objection that they are too complex when the real objection is that the concepts cannot be presented by means of the printed word. Under carefully controlled conditions it has been possible to present certain biological concepts which ordinarily are held off until the last years of high school, by means of the film on the second-grade level. What does this mean to the school of tomorrow? It means simply this—that the complete reorganization of the curriculum on all levels may come with our release from the many restrictions of time-honored methods of presenting subject matter.

We are all aware that methods and materials have a way of becoming entrenched in the system and being accepted by default, but as a matter of fact very little has been done about the situation. Furthermore, an original and courageous attack upon curriculum reorganization will be made only with the encouragement and through the support of the educational administrator. In our continuing examination of the objectives and subject matter of the curriculum, certain characteristics stand out in bold relief.

 Objectives, although often narrow in scope, are usually found to be in line with educational philosophy. Their restatement requires little originality and there is usually general agreement as to their validity.

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2. The subject matter of many courses of study seems to have very little bearing upon stated objectives. Why is this so often true? It is because we have too frequently left the development of subject matter and methods of presentation to the subject-matter specialist, who seldom has given any real consideration toward achieving the broader objectives of education. Rather he has presented his subject in a technically logical and factual manner, motivated often only by the question:—"Is the material too complex or difficult to be understood by the pupils on a given level?"

It is obvious that all the published findings in any subject-matter area cannot be taught on any or all levels. How then shall subject

matter be selected? Let us start with a simple and generally accepted statement of our educational objectives, or goals. Next, let us search the literature of the subject for generalizations which have emerged as a result of the work of outstanding subject-matter specialists. From these generalizations let us select those which have a definite bearing upon our stated objectives, rigorously excluding those which seem to have little or no bearing. Many of these generalizations finally selected are not true in the light of recent findings; some are accepted on the basis of present data and many are controversial. This will be true in any subject-matter area. The next step is the selection of subject matter which has a definite bearing upon generalizations. Some of the subject matter may seem to refute while some may seem to support the generalization. This is the material which should go to make up the course of study. It can be seen that the generalization has been used as a device for selecting subject matter, rather than primarily something to be taught. Subject matter is to be taught. The generalization will emerge in the pupil's mind as his own personal tool for thinking. Truth is the main objective of instruction. Authenticity of subject matter is all important and must be safeguarded all along the line.

This method of selection should operate in all fields of subject matter. In the construction of a course of study in science, the method of selecting generalizations would have to be determined first by what types of people are expected to emerge from the course: technicians in the field, or persons with an understanding appreciation of science? Do we wish to develop an understanding of the social implications of scientific knowledge or are we interested primarily in the general cultural development of the individual? Generalizations selected as answers to these questions should be the starting point in selecting the subject matter of the course.

The superintendent of schools should preserve as growing points in his system the functions of curriculum expansion and subject-matter presentation. The proper utilization of audio-visual materials carefully produced will provide a powerful impetus to both

of these functions. The talking picture represents the most effective instrument for an economic expansion of the curriculum into many desirable fields by overcoming the many limitations to learning inherent in earlier methods of communication.

One important factor in the proper production of films may be mentioned. Too many textbooks have one or both of the following shortcomings. First, they may have been developed by curriculum specialists and while a serious attempt was made to achieve the broader objectives of education, the subject matter may have been inaccurate. Second, the text may have been produced by subjectmatter specialists and fail almost entirely to meet the demands of modern educational objectives. An adequate film-production program must overcome both of these shortcomings. It must present authentic subject matter which has a definite bearing upon the broader objectives of education. Furthermore, it must present those aspects of subject matter which cannot be equally well presented by the use of other mediums of communication. In the process of producing the film, the subject-matter specialist must be held responsible for checking the authenticity of subject matter from the beginning of the continuity to the completion of the film. In the use of films made in this manner, and only in this manner, can the schools be justified in adding any of the materials of audio-visual instruction to their curriculum.

Much of what has been said up to this point will be taken for granted. Yet the story of the progress made in the use of educational films is not a very bright one. It has been one of opportunistic development and while enough has been done to prove the value of this newer device of communication, much still remains to be done.

In the first place most films have been made without an adequate background of research and investigation. Most research in the field has been of the evaluation type. Creative research in the production of the film to meet definite and unique requirements has too often been neglected. Most educational films have come about as a result of "spraying the landscape" with the camera. Standards

for the development of educational films, however, are now available as a result of widespread study and research. The superintendent of schools no longer need be satisfied with anything less than a thoroughgoing evaluation of films in terms of adequate standards before they are purchased.

In the second place there has too often been a haphazard development of the use of films in local instructional programs. In many cases the "director of visual education" has been one who has an interest in the making of amateur "movies," and who somehow "just drifted" into the job without adequate training and with little knowledge of the fundamentals of curriculum construction or any appreciation of his true function in the educational scheme of things. To him any film is educational and is accepted until something better comes along. Too often he has dictated to the teachers just what film they could use and when they could use it. He may take great pride in his ability to operate and repair projection machines and is willing to spend long hours discussing the merits of this or that make of projector. In his hands the film may become just another gadget tacked on to the educational program.

Opposed to this haphazard system of visual instruction is the planned program in which the film takes its proper place. Careful consideration is given to the requirements of educational philosophy, of the curriculum, of teaching method, of materials, and of administration and supervision. At this point it may be desirable to suggest what we now consider to be the criteria for an adequate program of audio-visual education.

- 1. The materials used should be well integrated with the whole program of instruction.
- 2. A serious attempt should be made to expand the curriculum beyond the offering possible with the older devices.
- 3. The materials should be selected according to recognized standards. For the educational film, these standards should include
  - a) Instructional value. The film should be a comprehensively taught lesson fitted directly to the course of study.
  - b) Uniqueness. The content which can best be presented by the film.

- c) Unity. Unity ensured by a central theme to which each sequence contributes.
- d) Accuracy. Every element of subject accurate and authentic.
- e) Thoroughness. The central theme presented in sufficient detail.
- f) Technical excellence. Good lighting, sharp definition, and well-balanced composition; sound clear and intelligible.
- g) Artistic value. General effect impressive as an artistic presentation.
- 4. Teachers should be trained in the use of the materials by means of
  - a) A unit course for all teachers.
  - b) A central group taught and its members made responsible for instructing their fellows.
  - c) A program of continuing supervision.
- 5. A system of services and physical provisions which renders easy and economical the use of the films by the teacher. There should be no unnecessary red tape. The films should be ready when needed. There should be a library of films owned by the school. The mechanics of projection should occupy little of the teacher's time.
- 6. A continuing curriculum study should furnish the foundation for the future selection of materials. This should be one of the "growing points" of the school system. The organization for this function should involve in more or less degree every teacher in the system.
- 7. An environment conducive to creative teaching wherever audio-visual materials are used. Such an environment involves
  - a) A wealth of fundamental examples of good teaching upon which to build. Fundamentally there are three main purposes for using the film in the classroom:
    - (1) Shown initially to introduce and arouse interest in the unit.
    - (2) To teach specific subject matter. This may require several showings.
    - (3) To synthesize the materials as a culminating activity.
    - It can be seen from this that one showing of the film is inadequate. In the light of this conclusion the rental of the film for each necessary showing is certainly less desirable than having the film in the possession of the school system.
  - b) An atmosphere of freedom which encourages the elaboration of standardized procedures by the classroom instructor.
    - It is expected that most of the progress in the refinement of methods will occur in the individual classroom. This cannot happen unless teachers are encouraged to try out new teaching devices and tech-

niques. Numerous examples of creative teaching have occurred in a recent utilization project in twelve centers in the eastern part of the United States. In one classroom during the progress of the unit the teacher turned off the sound and called upon various members of the class to furnish their own comments upon the film as it was shown silently. All kinds of oral and written expression grew out of the film showings. The list of artistic techniques developed during the progress of this project was indeed surprising.

c) Recognition of creative work done by individual teachers.

Provision must be made for individual recognition. Teachers should be encouraged to write up their experiences for professional magazines. Outstanding examples of creative teaching should be given publicity in faculty meetings and in the house organ of the system. Examples of good teaching should be demonstrated before teacher groups.

This recognition of good teaching will prove to be one of the most powerful forces for the professional development of the teaching staff while, on the other hand, a lack of recognition has a most

deadening effect upon the teacher.

The talking picture seems destined to play a large part in the school of tomorrow because it is essential to the solution of educational problems brought on by the ever expanding curriculum. Its most important functions would seem to be:

- 1. Release of teachers from time-consuming work and allowing more time to important duties which cannot be mechanized
- 2. The overcoming of limitations to learning which now hinder educational progress on all levels
- 3. Making possible economical expansion of the curriculum
- 4. Administering to the learning needs of thousands of pupils for whom the present twelve-year system of public education is really only a six-year program because of major psychological difficulties
- 5. Making possible an adult cultural and educational program which will enable the superintendent of schools to initiate more adequate programs of social engineering for his community.

## MODERNIZATION, BY WAY OF THE EDUCATIONAL FILM

#### LORRAINE NOBLE

Administrator, Educational Film Project
American Council on Education

It may come as a surprise to educators in general to know that Hollywood is interested in films for the schools. Not all Hollywood, but a considerable sized group of the hardest working technicians in the large motion-picture studios have turned longing eyes toward this field, believing it to hold fewer production "headaches" than their own field. In these green pastures the creative writer and producer could interpret life frankly and as it is lived, or could deal with the wealth of authenticated factual material—no more fantastic fantasies! Every year adds to this group men and women who share the earnest desire to create for the schools films that will carry their share of the burden of American education.

In every studio one hears glowing conversations about that vague something known as an educational film. No venturesome soul has attempted a Hollywood production for this field for the very simple reason that under present conditions there is no way by which the actual cost of even a modest film could be obtained from the school field. Even the enormously wealthy eastern production groups that have made school films in the past few years are still in the red.

Perhaps Hollywood expects too much from the school field. In its own area of entertainment films, Hollywood knows definitely and in advance that the minimum booking is sufficient to guarantee a return of all production and exploitation costs and a hand-some profit. Hollywood would be willing to forego the handsome profit for the pleasure of making educational films, provided the production cost could be returned.

Nearly three years ago the writer came out of Hollywood and journeyed to Washington, that mecca of people who want somebody "to do something about" things—this time, educational films.

A gratifying welcome was received from the United States Office of Education, and sometime later a special project was set up under the auspices of the American Council on Education. As for all good projects, ample foundation grants were obtained to carry on the work of establishing a clearing house for the educational film.

From the first day the project has been rather fondly called the "American Film Institute" although there has never been an actual incorporation of such an institute. In the early days of our work, it was hoped that the organization would be created eventually by special act of Congress, sharing prestige with the National Geographic Society, the American Red Cross, the D.A.R., and similar national nonprofit organizations. In spite of this lack of legal entity, however, the project has made rapid progress in the past two years.

The first year was devoted mainly to informal fact gathering, the holding of meetings of educational leaders, and the obtaining of a consensus of opinion as to the desirability of setting up an organization such as the American Film Institute. Sentiment in favor of it was unanimous. During the first year an elaborate plan for such an institute was submitted to the educational foundations for financing, but wisely it was decided that the project lacked both personnel experienced in this particular field and formal facts regarding the present status of and trends in visual instruction. Therefore, the year just finished was spent on a number of special studies aimed to bring in desired information. Briefly they are:

1. A survey of existing educational films. The United States Office of Education coöperated with the American Council on Education in sending out listing forms to more than 2,500 film producers who were believed to have material of educational value. A valiant attempt was made to obtain the age of each film—its date of production—a full description of its content, and its present location and availability for the school field. About 6,000 films were listed in this this survey, including many from little-known sources. From the data on the listing cards, however, it appears that probably less than

To per cent of these films are fit for today's classroom or auditorium. The schools have long been a dumping ground for inferior material that could not find a theatrical market. Each of the listings was given a Dewey decimal classification number and appropriately filed. Sectional mimeographed lists covering groups of films—for instance, all the films in the field of sports—were prepared last summer and will be available for some type of evaluatory work during the coming year. In fact a major portion of the current budget will be devoted to finding out how bad or good these 6,000 films are. Some labor may be saved by collecting film reviews of scattered reviewers—such as city visual departments that have looked at films for years. Dr. Charles F. Hoban, Jr., has recently joined the American Council on Education to supervise this phase of the work.

It is hoped, eventually, to obtain expert evaluations on a large number of films that may be recommended for school use. However, the task is extremely complicated, inasmuch as numerous new films are becoming available, and it has not been possible to create a service that could readily obtain listings on the new films.

Concurrent with this film survey, the H. W. Wilson Company has established a film-listing service, which it is interchanging with the listings obtained by the Council. The first edition of the Educational Film Catalog of the Wilson Company appeared in May of this year. A supplement is due the first of the year and thereafter frequent cumulative supplements are expected. If and when the American Council on Education is able to obtain good educational opinion on the usefulness of the large mass of film material it knows something about, this information will be included in the Film Catalog. This method of publication ensures continuity of the catalog, irrespective of the vagaries of special foundation grants.

2. The United States Office of Education also cooperated with the Council and did all of the actual work in connection with a National Survey of Visual Instruction in the Elementary and Secondary Schools. Indicative of the increased interest in audio-visual

instruction, more than 95 per cent of the superintendents in cities over 5,000 population replied to the questionnaire on this survey, Some 200,000 items were tabulated and two reports resulted from the survey. The first document, Directory and Inventory of Visual Instruction, has been recently published and is available through the Council. The directory lists more than 8,000 persons in charge of or "most interested in" visual instruction, with the extent of their visual-auditory equipment, including everything from motion-picture projectors to public-address systems. The total number of projectors reported as owned by the schools (secondary and elementary) accounts for the failure to supply market. Only 10,000 projectors (35mm., 16mm., silent and sound) were reported. About 500 of these were of the favored 16 mm. sound type. Five hundred projectors, scattered throughout the many schools, do not warrant the special production of films for this sized market. This acute lack of equipment is attributed to several causes: the depression, newness of the 16 mm. sound-on-film projector, lack of suitable sound films, and unfamiliarity of teachers with the technique of using films. It is not intended to infer that only sound films are desired in the schools, quite the contrary, but the consensus of opinion favors the purchase of this more modern teaching tool, in order that schools may be ready to use the films that the immediate future should bring in sound versions, as well as to salvage what is best of the older silent films. There is also strong sentiment in favor of the silent film for some subjects and for use in the lower grades.

The persons to whom the questionnaires on this survey were sent were asked to indicate the ways in which national educational agencies could be of greatest benefit in expanding the use of visual aids. Far and beyond all other desired helps was the suggestion that some form of Federal financing for the purchase of projectors, either at reduced costs or on deferred payment plan, would do more than any other one thing toward achieving the goal of modernization. Teacher training and lesson plans came next in importance.

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This problem of Federal financial aid is thus placed in a prominent light. There has been some vague discussion of matching money in State aid, but it is not believed that a definite move of this type is under way. However, there is another very simple type of Government aid that might be made available to schools, clubs, forums, or other groups wishing to purchase modern projection equipment. If the projector companies that sell this equipment would make arrangements similar to those made by the electric stove and refrigerator manufacturers whereby the Electric Home and Farm Authority, a Government corporation created to discount conditional sales contracts, would undertake to add this type of electrical equipment to its list of financed apparatus, then any one could buy a projector for around ten dollars a month. Some preliminary negotiations have been had between the projector manufacturers and the Authority, but at this writing the plan has not gone into effect. Several of the largest national educational agencies have agreed to get back of a campaign to encourage schools to purchase equipment if these favorable terms can be arranged.

The United States Office of Education will issue its analysis of the findings in a second document due sometime this fall.

3. Dr. Fannie Dunn and Miss Etta Schneider at Teachers College, Columbia University, have coöperated in carrying on a bibliographical study. In the past year more than 5,000 articles or publications dealing with visual instruction have been listed and classified appropriately. Brief digests have been completed on the leading articles in several fields, such as (a) the administration of visual aids, (b) teacher preparation, and (c) experimental use of the film in classrooms. Temporary mimeographed copies of these digests have had limited circulation and a plan is being worked out whereby some form of permanent publication, as well as continuity of effort, will be assured for this important class of work.

4. There has long been a need for a simple handbook on the methods of administering a visual department. Dr. Edgar Dale, of

Ohio State University, (who was borrowed for nine months for special work on this project) has been compiling into such a book the results of his travels and visits to various visual departments, both in this country and abroad. The book is expected to be completed early next year and will probably be published by the Council.

5. The Motion Picture Committee of the Women's Section of the American Physical Education Association has been attempting to discover for the Council the difficulties that would be met by similar committees in other fields. When the project was first set up, the plan was to have numerous subject-matter committees survey their respective fields to ascertain what areas should be covered by future film production. So far the physical-education committee has worked in the field of women's sports, and has a list of games in which films would be helpful, with numerous suggestions as to the type of film that is desired, and data on the general interest in the field. This method of procedure has not yet proved entirely practicable on account of the many natural difficulties encountered. However, this has been an experimental study to locate these difficulties and, if possible, to discover a solution.

To some extent the foregoing studies will color the activity of the Council for the coming year. In addition, the problem of teacher training and film distribution will receive special attention. The writer has discovered a widespread interest in the establishment of what might be termed a network of educational exchanges. These would be State and local film depots, such as the university extension divisions, teachers' colleges, State departments of education, State and public libraries, as well as county and city units. Possibly each State may be able to work out within its own boundaries the type of visual-aids distribution service most practicable, with one clearing house in each State for information about the availability of visual aids, as well as films that are needed for that section. This would be an excellent field in which to utilize National Youth Administration-aided students to help carry the cost on increased personnel.

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After two months of intensive conferences with members of the motion-picture industry in Hollywood last summer, the writer is convinced that unlimited first-class instructional film material would be forthcoming immediately if a practical, business-like distribution network could be established. At present, no major producer seems interested in undertaking direct distribution to the school field, as it involves too many thousands of contacts, repeated almost endlessly, and the *maximum* outlet is only 500 machines. If our 276,000 schools had even 5,000 projectors the attitude would be entirely different!

It has been interesting to note the increased appreciation by the motion-picture industry of the unique needs of the classroom; also the evident wishes of the individual producers to pool their instructional film releases in order that one special organization might collect and distribute all product from the industry to the school units. The carrying out of this idea would immediately take care of the main problem of distribution—the centralization of materials to be furnished the schools. A reasonable number of professionally made films suitable for school use would spur interest greatly.

Reviewing the numerous activities that have emanated from this educational film project of the Council, it is believed that not the least important phase of our work has been arousing interest in other educational groups. Nearly 100 other organizations that we know about are carrying on some type of activity in regard to educational films and other visual aids. To the extent of our facilities we try to keep in touch with these scattered activities in order to bring about an interchange of experience. The Council never planned to undertake in its own behalf all of the studies that must be carried on before this field reaches its ultimate development. Instead, the sentiment back of the foundation grants to the Council for projects of this type is that they are intended to act more as "leavening in the dough." Judging by the widespread interest and coöperation we have met on all fronts, our crock is overflowing.

## THE MOTION PICTURE AND SOCIAL-HYGIENE EDUCATION

JEAN B. PINNEY

Associate Director, American Social Hygiene Association

Social hygiene is a subject which naturally lends itself to interpretation through the motion picture. This fact has made it possible for social-hygiene agencies to disseminate to millions of people in all parts of the world social-hygiene information which might not have reached them in any other way.

Social-hygiene films have been made for various purposes: for public information in support of the social-hygiene movement; for education and protection of the individual in personal health; to provide knowledge concerning the facts of biology and reproduction; and as a means of bringing new developments and techniques to the attention of medical and other professional groups. Two types have been developed—drama films and lecture or documentary films.

Several European countries have made regular use of social-hygiene films. In France, a film called *The Three Friends* and in Germany another called *Feind im Blut* (The Enemy in the Blood) were widely shown. The British Social Hygiene Council has made and distributed a number of pictures, among them a four-reel drama film called *Deferred Payment*, used also in this country.

In the United States, the American Social Hygiene Association has been chiefly responsible for making social-hygiene films and getting them before the public. Beginning with the drama film Fit to Fight, made for men in the camps in 1917, with the coöperation of the War Department, and the companion film, The End of the Road, made in 1918 for women and girls, the Association produced about twelve films between 1917 and 1923. Aside from the drama films the subjects dealt with were biological and medical, and of

these six are still in circulation. Since 1920 about one hundred and fifty prints have been sold or loaned in nineteen foreign countries and several times that number have been purchased by health departments, social-hygiene agencies, and educational groups in the United States. While the drama films, because of change in costume fashion, production, and acting technique, have naturally become outmoded, the biological and medical films, being mostly scientific photography, or diagrammatic, are still widely circulated. The four-reel biological film The Gift of Life is in demand by schools, parent groups, and similar agencies. The films, Modern Diagnosis and Treatment of Syphilis and Gonorrhea in the Male, are used regularly by medical societies and nursing groups. The Army, the Navy, and Federal groups such as the CCC camps and the TVA utilize the existing lecture films on venereal diseases regularly with their men.

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While recognizing the value of educational efforts with such specialized groups, the Association, as a national voluntary agency concerned with health conservation, has always been especially interested in motion pictures as a means of educating the general public, or so-called "mass education." As in the case of other communicable diseases, syphilis and gonorrhea, with which social-hygiene medical measures are particularly concerned, cannot be stamped out unless intelligent coöperation of the public is secured. But the problem of securing such participation is somewhat more complicated in relation to these diseases than in some other health problems. In dealing with a disease like typhoid fever, for example, the understanding and coöperation of the great mass of people is not necessary, but success depends upon the intelligent action of the health and administrative authorities in a community. With slightly different methods the public can be protected through immuniza-

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup>For a complete list of the Association's available films, *see* the folder Social Hygiene Motion Pictures, Publication no. 766.

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tion against such diseases as smallpox or diphtheria. But with such diseases as tuberculosis and syphilis, there is no method of immunizing people or protecting them, except as each individual is armed with knowledge to keep him from getting infected or to teach him how to avoid infecting other persons. Consequently, to prevent and control such diseases we are dependent largely on education. The social-hygiene drama films which I have mentioned are examples of efforts to provide such education to the general public.

The first social-hygiene drama film, so far as we have knowledge, was a screen presentation (silent) of Eugene Brieux's *Damaged Goods*, sponsored, produced, and played in California, about 1915, by that fine veteran actor Richard Bennett, who had previously produced and acted this play on the stage. The screen production followed as a natural consequence of the wide success of the stage play, and although some objections were voiced it played extensively

throughout the country for several years.

The possibilities of motion pictures for social-hygiene education were thoroughly proved during the World War. The drama and lecture films Fit to Fight and The End of the Road, based on careful study and observation by scientific groups, physicians, physiologists, and psychologists, and produced and directed under expert guidance, demonstrated conclusively the theory that education is a strong force in maintaining health and avoiding disease. The educational program with the armed forces was without doubt a factor in maintaining the low rate of venereal infections among the soldiers here and abroad. Also, special studies of audience reaction

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> The American Social Hygiene Association, the United States War Department, the War Department Commission on Training Camp Activities, and, in the case of women's films, the Young Women's Christian Association sponsored these films. They were written and directed by Lieutenant Edward H. Griffith, who has since become one of Hollywood's leading directors. Trained actors, including Raymond McKee, Paul Kelly, Claire Adams, and others, played the various roles. In *The End of the Road*, Richard Bennett again proved his interest by playing the leading part. Before they were shown to the groups for which they were made, numerous previews were held before professional groups to detect scientific inaccuracies.

among civilians and soldiers<sup>a</sup> indicated an eagerness for socialhygiene information and a disposition to make intelligent use of it.

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In spite of the fact that costumes and technique became old-fashioned and even ludicrous, these films continued to be shown and to be received by the public with interest in the sixteen years following the war period. No longer ago than the winter of 1932 Dr. Gordon Bates, General Director of the Canadian Social Hygiene Council in Toronto, showed *The End of the Road*, a silent picture, to 20,000 people on paid admissions in ten days.

Such experiences as this and frequent requests from State health officers and other agencies and persons for a new drama film convinced us that the production of such a film would be among the most helpful services which the Association, as the national socialhygiene organization, could render to the States and communities. But the question was how to finance the production. An answer seemed to be offered when the officials of one of the best known of reliable motion-picture producers approached us with a wellconstructed outline for developing a scenario and we were glad to join in what seemed like a very promising plan. The film was completed during the summer of 1933 and was titled Damaged Lives. Although the making of this film was finally undertaken by a new firm—the Weldon Pictures Corporation—we assisted in every way within our means in the preparation of the scenario and film, furnishing copies of our films and scientific material for study in Hollywood by the producers and by Dr. Gordon Bates, who had been loaned by the Canadian Social Hygiene Council to supervise personally the accuracy of technical details. We called the attention of professional and lay groups to this film through a series of previews, through our publications The Journal of Social Hygiene and Social

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>8</sup> A Psychological Study of Motion Pictures in Relation to Venereal Disease Campaigns, by Karl S. Lashley and John B. Watson of the Psychological Laboratory of Johns Hopkins University. United States Interdepartmental Social Hygiene Board, 1922. The film selected for study was Fit to Fight (retitled after the Armistice Fit to Win). Eight different groups, varying widely in social and educational level, totaling 4,800 to 5,000 persons, were studied.

Hygiene News, and through the preparation of a special American lecture film to follow the drama, when it proved that the original version made for showing in Canada was not entirely suitable for use in the United States. The Canadian Social Hygiene Council and the Canadian film agencies were equally interested and entered into an active program of promotion of showings throughout the Dominion.

The difficulties of making any educational film for commercial distribution, aside from the problems involved in its distribution, are many. To produce a picture that will be scientifically accurate and dramatically gripping, yet nonsensational, is an undertaking of formidable size. When the necessity for dealing with a subject like the disease syphilis in a reassuring rather than alarming manner is added, and yet in a way which will not minimize the danger from such a health menace, the problem becomes more than ever intricate, and it is probably hardly possible to make a film which would satisfy all concerned. *Damaged Lives*, we believe, does a fairly good job, though audiences of physicians or trained nurses or social workers will perhaps find in the film, as we do, various weaknesses and points which they would like to revise or eliminate.

Briefly, the story of the drama Damaged Lives' concerns a well-to-do young couple who are engaged to be married but whose wedding owing to various circumstances does not take place until after the young man becomes infected with syphilis through a brief and unpremeditated contact with another woman. Learning of his infection he unwisely visits a quack doctor who charges him a large fee and assures him that he is all right. When the young wife becomes pregnant and her doctor's careful examination reveals syphilis infection both her husband and she are frantic with anxiety. Refusing to believe her physician's assurance that proper treatment will enable her to bear a healthy child, and that both she and her husband may

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> For a more detailed synopsis and the full scenario of the lecture film, *see* the booklet A Three Point Program in Health Education. American Social Hygiene Association, Publication no. 857.

be cured, she tries to kill herself and her husband. The boy succeeds in preventing this, and the film ends on a hopeful note. Throughout the drama it is reiterated that there is no stage in the disease when physicians cannot do something to alleviate or check it.

The drama is followed by a three-reel lecture film Science and Modern Medicine, discussing the effect of syphilis upon the human system, giving the facts of reproduction, and repeating the possibility of cure through early and persistent treatment. The lecture film has now been revised for showing separately from the drama. In addition to the drama and lecture film a special series of pamphlets were prepared by the Association for distribution in connection with public showings.

Following the completion of *Damaged Lives*, the large number of previews held in New York and elsewhere by the Association before professional groups seemed to indicate general approval, and on September 15, 1933, the public world *première* of the film occurred in Boston at the Majestic Theatre, with the State Department of Health, the Massachusetts Social Hygiene Society, and other State and local groups coöperating.

The Boston showing was a success from the beginning. Although a heavy downfall of rain prevailed at the *première*, the house, which was a rather large one, was filled and the picture remained at the Majestic Theatre for six weeks, showing to an audience of 4,000 people per day with paid admissions of 50 and 75 cents. In all, the total commercial showings during 1933 and 1934 were in 32 States, 426 theaters, and 300 cities, with a total audience of around 700,000 persons. The film was also shown in Spain, France, England, Ireland, Scotland, Wales, Holland, Argentina, Australia, Chile, the Central American States, and Cuba. In England it had an enormous success, running for some weeks at the Strand Theatre.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup> The lecture film, Science and Modern Medicine, may be rented or purchased from the American Social Hygiene Association in 16 or 35 mm.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>6</sup> The special series of pamphlets include Health for Man and Boy, Women and Their Health, and Marriage and Parenthood, Publication nos. 839, 840, 841. They may be secured for five cents each from the Association.

In this country, however, the New York Board of Censors failed to approve the film for public showing. The Censor Boards of Ohio and Pennsylvania followed suit. As this automatically reduced the potential income of the distributors by about 37 per cent, the film had small chance of being a financial success. With the small force which the distributors were able to maintain it became impossible to safeguard the picture against sensational publicity and exploitation by unscrupulous exhibitors. The Association, therefore, regretfully found it necessary to withdraw its sponsorship at the close of 1934, though our point of view as regards the value of the film has not changed and we hope that it may yet be possible to show it more widely to educational groups if commercial distribution cannot be effected.

Various experiments indicated that the public reception of the film was hearty, appreciative, and intelligent. In Providence, Rhode Island, for example, several thousand comment cards turned in by audiences were almost unanimously commendatory. In Boston many persons during the period of the showings sought advice as to taking up or resuming treatment for syphilis. In London it was found that the increase in the number of patients coming to clinics for syphilis treatment after seeing the film was as high as 25 per cent. Best of all the effect produced by the picture was not that of fear or phobia, but rather of an intelligent comprehension of the health problem involved and a common-sense determination to seek sound medical attention.

Going back to the difficulties of getting social-hygiene motionpicture films before the public, aside from the problems of distribution and publicity, a real obstacle lies in the fact that many unscientific and sensational "sex" films have been produced since the War and in most States have been shown without restriction. It is the content of these films which has been responsible for the rule made by the Motion Picture Distributors of America that no film dealing with sex hygiene, white slavery, or venereal diseases shall be shown in theaters. This makes it impossible to show social-hygiene films of any sort anywhere except in the second-rate and less important picture theaters. The ruling also means that the distributor or producer handling such pictures must conduct his business in the face of open disapproval of a large and important section of the motion-picture industry. Oftentimes exhibitors are skeptical about that type of picture, considering it a gamble, and the result is that they require a guarantee from the distributor or insist on such a large percentage of the box-office receipts that the producer and distributor cannot make a profit.

The fly-by-night sensational sex pictures, in our opinion, are also responsible to a great extent for the attitude of the boards of censors in the States and communities. A precedent has been established for dealing with them drastically, and the censors have come to believe that any picture that has to do with venereal diseases is unfit for public consumption and should be banned. Cooperating with the National Board of Review, members of our staff have seen many of these unscientific and sensational pictures and believe that the censor boards cannot be blamed for showing conservatism. We believe, however, that the censor boards should be persuaded to differentiate between good and bad films and we have endeavored to set up standards by which such a distinction might be made, though so far no censor board has shown a willingness to be guided by such suggestions. Some of the qualifications which we consider fundamental are: the film must be scientifically accurate; it must have a definite purpose and continuity; it must offer useful and important knowledge in an acceptable manner; must avoid debatable and unestablished points in public health; must properly correlate medical content with social and moral aspects; must secure the approval of lay groups; must demonstrate its ability to secure popular support; must

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>7</sup>This is quite important to some groups. The criticism has been made against *Damaged Lives* by such groups that there is no attempt to point up the social and moral aspect of the character's conduct, and that the film therefore does not realize its full possibilities for education.

be safeguarded against misrepresentation and exploitation in advertising or use in any way harmful to the public; and must be withdrawn, revised, or limited in showings in accordance with practical experience.

If a social-hygiene film could be produced covering all of these qualifications we believe it might satisfy even the censor boards. Meanwhile the informed opinion of such groups as university classes and the readers of this magazine will do much to break down censor

prejudice.

In discussing social-hygiene motion pictures this paper has not dwelt upon the objectives of the social-hygiene program, nor the method by which these objectives are approached, nor have the particular problems presented by the disease syphilis been considered. Inquiries regarding such details will be welcomed at the Association's offices at 50 West 50th Street, New York, N. Y. Perhaps it may be repeated here, however, in conclusion, that the Association regards public education on a large scale as one of the most effective weapons against this insidious and dangerous disease, for which more than a half million people in this country are known to be constantly under medical treatment, and at least as many more infected but not receiving medical care; and that as a means of education the social-hygiene motion picture, properly produced and distributed, ranks with those other two instruments of mass education-the newspaper and the radio. All three of these channels for reaching the public are restricted to some extent at present. Progress is being made in removing these restrictions, however.\* The last few months have seen a decided increase in liberality on the part of newspapers

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>8</sup> See the New York Daily News for January 31, 1936, and subsequent issues for a series of eight articles on syphilis; the Chicago Sunday Tribune for October 7, 13, and 20, 1935; the Washington Daily Herald of April and May 1936 for a series of 20 articles "Public Enemy Number 1," and numerous other newspapers for references in news columns, editorial space, and headlines to syphilis and gonorrhea. The radio talks referred to were given by Surgeon General Thomas A. Parran, Dr. William F. Snow, Michael Davis, and other authorities on public health and social hygiene. For a comprehensive discussion of problems and progress in social-hygiene education, see "New Brooms and Old Cobwebs," by Jean B. Pinney, Journal of Social Hygiene, April 1936.

as regards the printing of medical terms and scientific information. National radio networks have permitted and even encouraged the use of the word "syphilis" in recent health talks, and it may be in time that the State censor boards will permit showings in New York and other large cities with a consequent commercial profit which will enable the production and distribution of *Damaged Lives* or some other social-hygiene film, and consequent results in public health.

As a novel and inexpensive means of supplementing regular motion-picture films, the Association has recently been experimenting with a "talking slide film," operated in connection with a phonograph disc recording of a social-hygiene talk. The first film of this description was produced in 1936 by Ralph Rushmore under the Association's sponsorship, and is entitled For All Our Sakes. While it is yet too soon to tabulate any results obtained from showings of this film, it is believed that the new presentation will be decidedly effective as a means of informing the lay public. Attractively photographed, accompanied by a voice recording of unusual variety and vividness, and with the added virtue of inexpensiveness, it is already proving its popularity."

The film and disc record have been prepared for use with any standard "talking-slide" machine. It may be secured through such of the State health departments and other agencies that have purchased copies, or purchased directly from the distributors, Marley Sherris Associates, or from the American Social Hygiene Association, both at 50 West 50th Street, New York, N. Y.

### THE CINEMA ENTERS THE LIBRARY

GEORGE FREEDLEY

Librarian, Theatre Collection, New York Public Library

The cinema has of necessity become a large part of any theater collection in a library or a museum. Years ago the director of the New York Public Library realized the increasing importance of moving pictures as an art, as a business, and as a force in the cultural and intellectual world. At that time books, catalogues, pamphlets, and periodicals, both trade and fan, were secured for the Library by purchase and gift. This considerable book collection is one of the largest in a public institution.

In 1929–1930 George Kleine, one of the pioneers, along with Edison, Lumière, and Méliès, presented to the New York Public Library a very great many trade magazines, pressbooks, and, what is of the first importance, his account books and business records. The student of the cinema may study at first hand the development

of the business side of this type of entertainment.

The Motion Picture Producers and Distributors of America, Inc., have coöperated with the Library in collecting and preserving cinematic data. The late Frank J. Wilstach presented his collection which included many early moving-picture items. During his lifetime the active collecting of pressbooks, stills, reviews, and moving-picture scripts was begun. Since 1930 the Library has bound in scrapbook form one or more reviews of each feature film released in New York for regular adult audiences. In addition to these bound volumes of reviews, all New York newspapers as well as two from London are clipped for items of motion-picture interest. These clippings represent an accumulation of pieces concerning plays, actors, producers, directors, cameramen, as well as feature articles about censorship, organizations, shooting, new movements in the field. The Robinson Locke Collection of Dramatic Scrapbooks contains much of interest along these lines. As this is one of the great theatrical col-

lections, naturally the film is adequately covered. Mr. Locke, owner and editor of the *Toledo Blade*, through his newspaper connections was able to secure much material of all kinds which is of enormous present-day interest. Stills and newspaper criticisms recreate the beginnings and development of the silent screen.<sup>1</sup>

Naturally one is interested to know the type of person who uses a collection of this kind and for whom it is intended. First and foremost it is used by the industry itself. The research, publicity, script, and business offices frequently find it necessary to obtain theatrical information. This may take the form of a request for the copyright owner of a given play. Again it may be information concerning the author of a play or an actor who has appeared in it. Runs of plays, dates of opening, and names of producers are frequently sought.

All motion-picture companies in these days maintain research departments, adequate or inadequate. Those companies possessing first-rate research people are to be congratulated because the inaccuracies frequently attributed to Hollywood are avoided. If inaccuracies appear in a film it is not always fair to blame the research worker back of it. Frequently the correct information has been supplied but has been intentionally disregarded by the director and producer.

Any large library or museum has frequent contacts with these research people. It is the intention of the New York Library that its Theatre Collection staff act in the capacity of liaison officers between the industry and the various divisions of the Library. For the one question which is fully theater, there are a half dozen which tax the full resources of any institution. A characteristic theater request received by this department was for a picture of the interior of Lillian

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup>The Theatre Collection of the New York Public Library is organized, administratively, as a section of the Main Reading Room. A portion of the North Hall is screened off as a reading room for theater readers. There the index catalogue of fugitive material is kept. This catalogue brings together the files of clippings, photographs, stills, and programs. Chapters in books and articles in magazines have been indexed in addition to such articles included in the regularly published indices of periodical literature. Full records of books are to be found in the Public Catalogue located in Room 315 of this Library.

Russell's dressing room at the Casino Theater, New York, in 1891. Many requests are for information on costumes, some of which may be answered by the American History Room or the Art Department or the Print Room. Again the Map Section, the Economics Division, or the Manuscript Division must be called on for assistance. It is our job to see that these motion-picture people get to the correct sources of information no matter where located.

Writers for motion-picture magazines draw largely on our biographical material, whether books, periodicals, or newspaper clippings. The serious evaluator or the historian makes use principally of the material filed under subject. Artists use stills as a source for their work. The audience is principally concerned with the com-

plete, for New York, file of criticisms.

On the other hand the first concern of the Theatre Collection must be the preservation of theatrical records and the collecting of them. However, the fact that it is actually working with the producers makes it possible for it to secure material not otherwise available and to keep itself alive to the constantly changing demands of its special public. Any collection that does not bear closely in mind the needs of its readers will soon die, at least as an educational force in the industry, no matter how long the collection may actually be preserved. The librarian and curator must bear in mind the necessity to anticipate the needs of their public and to guide them. Classifications that confuse the public defeat their very purpose. There is a certain advantage in having the person who actually meets the reader classify the material and vice versa. This is usually not practicable in large institutions but the very special nature of the so-called fugitive material in which are to be found the precious and fastperishing records of the cinema has brought about the need of a special staff. It was necessary to create a technique for handling material of this kind. Book material as well as bound periodicals bring no special problems to the trained librarian but photographs, programs, scenarios, newspaper clippings, etc., are difficult to handle in the average library without a special librarian.

The writer has evolved the system in use in this library and is willing to admit its weaknesses so long as its main purpose is recognized. Changes in technique have been made and will continue to be made because new problems arise; a new public creates new problems. Elasticity of mind and extreme catholicity are necessary to meet the constant and never ending demands of a theater public as exacting as this. The writer welcomes these demands because he realizes that they are made only because of the burning interest of the readers. New types of information are required constantly. Every change in audience interest as well as producing interest is reflected in the questions asked.

The production center of the industry is in Hollywood but the main offices are located in New York and it is there that the most difficult research problems are handled. The large centralized collection of the New York Public Library is the Library's answer to the needs of the motion-picture public. All books, stills, pressbooks, scrapbooks should go into this depository because as it approaches completeness, its service is greater.

### AMATEUR-GROUP FILM PRODUCING WITH ECONOMY

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KENNETH F. SPACE

Staff Member, Religious Motion Picture Foundation

Any group of nonprofessional film enthusiasts, regardless of the experience of its members as individual motion-picture makers, will find its way filled with unexpected pitfalls when it attempts its first group photoplay production. Fortunately, however, most of these pitfalls can be avoided and the balance bridged over by careful planning and systematic procedure.

May we, as a group producing experimental motion pictures with, we hope and believe, a purpose, suggest a few preventatives and remedies which we have learned through sometimes not too happy circumstances? We have not made all the mistakes possible but we have made our share and through them we have approached a not perfect but constantly improving method of procedure.

The average group in attempting to organize its forces for a production is quite apt to consider the problem too easy of accomplishment and fail through lack of people willing to make the necessary sacrifices of time and money after the novelty has worn off. The entire responsibility for the production gradually comes to rest on the shoulders of a few persons. On the other hand the group may suffer from making the production problem too complicated and expensive to be fun to do and, after all, in spite of all our work and worry we should expect to have fun and enjoyment while making a picture.

In the first place, a group either organizes and then looks for a story to film or several people get together and, excited over a story idea, form a production staff to bring that story into actuality. Let us follow along with the first of these two types of groups.

The group probably started because one or two persons in the crowd owned or had access to a camera. The obvious thing to do,

and it has been done many times, would be to elect him or them president, vice-president, secretary, and treasurer. A far more sensible procedure, however, would be to create offices or departments covering all phases of the production and assign each and every member of the group to one or more of these divisions, balancing their capabilities and their desires. In other words, if one member has artistic ability but desires to direct, put that person in charge of sets with direct responsibility for them and at the same time make him an assistant director so that he may get some experience pertaining to that line of activity. One thing, however, that cannot be stressed too much is the fact that the person in charge of each department be held absolutely responsible for the duties required of him, be it costumes, properties, or whatnot, and he should refrain from accepting the position unless he can devote the proper time and effort needed to carry out his part of the work.

The fundamental divisions of a photoplay-producing group are directorial, photographic, electrical, property (which may include costuming), and clerical (script clerk). Each division may, of course, consist of only one individual or a group except in the case of the director who, after discussion with the actors, has the sole power to decide on action and, in the absence of or due to the lack of a general manager, acts as chief "holder-together" of the group.

Having organized, the next problem is the story or plot. That sounds easy until you try it. The first two suggestions are generally to do a comedy or a mystery thriller, in spite of the facts that comedy is the most difficult thing to do in pantomime, our "funny" scenes seeming merely "smart-alecky" to our audience, and that the average amateur mystery photoplay still remains a mystery long after the show is over.

Why not do a simple plot first? Perhaps it could be partially or completely filmed out-of-doors to simplify the photographic problem, and let us limit it to one 400-foot reel for economy's sake, to lighten the technical problem of the first production and to increase

our chances of doing it well. And here is another thought, if it is to be well done and worth while, let us pick a story that will serve some socially useful purpose, so that upon presentation it will contribute something besides entertainment to the minds of the audience. I know that when I say a socially useful purpose many of you picture a very dry and uninteresting plot. That need not be so if imagination is brought to bear—in fact the plot of one of our recent one-reel productions is merely this: "A youngster lends his stamp collection to another lad who accidently loses a valuable stamp. The boy to whom the stamp collection belongs refuses to forgive, but later he damages a book belonging to some one else and desires his forgiveness. He then realizes his own lack of understanding and tolerance and the two boys become pals again."

That is what we mean by a simple and purposeful picture. It called on all the imagination and skill of the director, cameraman, and light man, but resulted in a compact and interesting little photoplay

with truly excellent performances by the two youngsters.

But, to go back a moment, after writing the story in scenario form it should be broken down and a script book made. This should be a veritable encyclopedia of facts regarding the production: the costumes worn by each player in each scene, the number of feet of film estimated for each shot to take, all the scenes that could be filmed on the same set at the same work period, etc.; in fact, the script clerk should be able to find the answer to any question regarding the production in a few seconds and some one completely unfamiliar with the film should be able to get a bird's-eye view, clearly and concisely, of the entire photoplay by merely reading the script book.

This brings us to our next point, that of selecting the players or cast. Do not waste too much time and money in attempting to hire semiprofessional or experienced actors. Every one has a secret or not too secret desire to act and, given the proper encouragement, ama-

teurs give an amazingly good account of themselves.

Select stories to fit your particular group as regards types and ages

for your cast and if you have an "elderly man" part, for example, it would be better to enlist the help of your grandfather rather than make up a young man for the part. Avoid make-up in all cases as much as possible since, unless applied by experts, it is almost always detectable. In selecting your own group as players you will not only avoid the so-called artistic temperament and gain a willingness on the part of your cast to follow directions without quibbling, but, most valuable of all, you will gain a simple sincerity of portrayal that will get across convincingly to your audiences.

As far as sets are concerned, it has been our experience that it is simplest and least expensive to use real locations. In other words, if the script calls for a tenement bedroom, get in touch with some social-service agency and, by paying the tenant a few dollars for electricity consumed and the inconvenience, it is possible to take in your cast and lights and film your scenes in a short time. Artificial sets are expensive to build and too often are obviously stage settings. Using authentic sets also does away with the necessity and expense of many properties that might never be used again.

An economic photographic technique is comparatively simple to attain. If you use a photocell exposure meter according to directions you cannot miss on the score of exposure and the use of supersensitive film and a fast lens, while more expensive to begin with, save money in lighting equipment, bulbs, and current. Do not be misled by still pictures from Hollywood taken on the sets and showing innumerable lights, both flood and spot, pouring on the scene from every side. You do not need them and with study can even duplicate Hollywood lighting effects with simple equipment. In most of our work we use only one main source for over-all lighting, such as a No. 4 Photoflood and then a few simple and inexpensive reflectors to accent certain characters or points of interest.

The director will also do well to forget Hollywood with its shooting of the same scene fifty times or so over the period of a whole day to get a good result. I have always considered that a reflection on the

intelligence of Hollywood. Take your action bit by bit, rehearse each scene carefully four or five times, film it twice or three times at the most, and you will in most cases get as good a result as you ever can. Filming a scene twice may seem doubtful economy but it is less trouble and expense than having something go slightly wrong and unobserved in one of the shots necessitating going back for retakes, as would happen had it only been photographed once.

In conclusion, we admit that all this sounds like work—and it really is work, make no mistake about that-but it is also fun, and it is one of the most beneficial recreations known, if we are to believe psychologists who tell us that the finest recreations are the creative ones, for you will find every part of producing a photoplay, from script to screen, calling forth your very best efforts if the results are

to be worth the undertaking.

# THE NATIONAL BOARD OF REVIEW OF MOTION PICTURES—HOW IT WORKS

### WILTON A. BARRETT

Executive Secretary, National Board of Review of Motion Pictures

The National Board of Review of Motion Pictures is a volunteer citizen body whose aim is to help the public clarify and record what it feels about motion pictures, to provide a leadership in expressing appreciation in a practical way of the best that the motion-picture screen presents, and in supplying effective encouragement to those forces in motion-picture production which may be looked to for the development of the screen's great potentialities, both recreationally and educationally. Its method is through country-wide affiliations. The National Board is opposed to legal censorship regarding all forms of the motion picture, as it is opposed to dictatorship of the screen by any arbitrary group, its own function being that of a non-partisan, nonsectarian organization.

It believes that far more constructive than censorship or repression is the method of selecting the better pictures, publishing descriptive, classified lists of them, and building up audiences and support for them through the work of community groups, thus speaking to the producer through the unmistakable terms of the box office. In face of the undeniable fact that every man, within the limits set by the law, has the right to the kind of entertainment he prefers—in motion pictures as well as in reading, sports, playgoing, music—the National Board has good reason based on experience to continue in its belief that, slow as the process may be, the public taste can be educated and improved. One of the most effective ways of building that improvement is to help the public to a consciousness of what its taste really is, and give it some voice in the selection of its entertainment.

The National Board is equally concerned with motion pictures as

a means of education. It recognizes that motion pictures are of great importance in adult education and of still greater importance as an instrument in the cultural and technical education of youth. Though it does not pass on purely educational films, the Board tries at all times and in every possible way to further the general use of motion pictures as teaching tools in visual instruction. A large part of its purpose is to spread among the public through its affiliated citizen groups and direct contacts and through institutions of education a realization of the enormous possibilities contained in motion pictures as an aid to teaching. It strives to make effective this effort by supplying up-to-date information on suitable available films in the educational field. This is becoming more and more an important part of its activities.

The National Board derives its income in three ways:

1. It makes a prorata charge of \$6.25 to film producers or distributors for every 1,000 feet of film reviewed. This charge is against the so-called negative or master prints. The Board has never added a charge for what are called positive reels, the numerous prints that go into the theaters, which is the practice of several of the State censor boards. The \$6.25 for each reel reviewed is the sole charge.

2. It receives a modest amount for the sale of its informational literature, its bulletin service, and magazine. As the demand for this service increases it is slowly putting this work on a self-sustaining basis. The department of the National Motion Picture Council is partially sustained by membership fees of two kinds: associate membership at \$2.00 a year, and coöperating membership at \$10.00 a year. A fee of \$1.00 is asked from each member of an organized group affiliated under the National Council or Motion Picture Study Club plan.

3. The Board is open to donations from public-spirited funds or individuals not connected with the motion-picture industry.

The National Board's finances are administered by its Executive

Committee. All items within its budget—the office overhead comprising rent, salaries, printing, together with such moderate sums as are expended for traveling expenses and publicity—are apportioned by and paid at the direction of the Executive Committee. The accounts of the Board are audited by a certified public accountant. All checks are signed by the Board's treasurer. Therefore, the sole disposal of the Board's funds is in the hands of its Executive Committee.

The National Board of Review carries on its work through various committees. All members of the Board serve without pay. They are representatives of varied interests and activities and many are, like the Board's founders, connected with large public-welfare organizations or educational institutions. No member is or may be connected with the motion-picture industry according to the regulations governing membership on the Board. The only people working for the Board who receive any salary are the office staff, which operates the machinery of arranging reviews, collating the judgments of the Review Committee as recorded on their ballots, and disseminating the information prepared by the Board for its public. No member of the office staff has any vote in the decisions of the Board's committees. The staff is employed by the Executive Committee.

The Board's work is handled by the following committees:

1. The General Committee, a body evolved out of the original group organized in 1909 by Charles Sprague Smith, director of the People's Institute. It is the governing and advisory body, the appeal committee of the National Board, to which policies are referred and to which questioned decisions of the Review Committee may be carried either by the producers or by members of the Review Committee itself. It also meets in an advisory capacity with the Committee on Exceptional Photoplays.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Composed of Frank Astor, A. A. Brill, John R. Davies, Raymond L. Ditmars, Vanessa Grover, Frederic C. Howe, J. K. Paulding, Walter W. Pettit, Langdon Post, Miriam Sutro Price, Marguerite E. Schwarzman, Frederic M. Thrasher, George J. Zehrung, and George W. Kirchwey, *chairman*, all serving without remuneration.

2. The Executive Committee, composed of members of the General Committee, is the directing body of the Board, authorized by the General Committee to be in charge of the formulation of policies, the election of members, the expenditure of funds, and the supervision of all administrative affairs. The chairman of the Executive Committee is the chairman of the National Board.

3. The Membership Committee, which supervises the membership list of reviewers and the work of the review secretaries, regulates the routine of membership matters and recommends the names of proposed new reviewers to the consideration of the Executive Committee.

4. The Review Committee, the large group of over three hundred members who carry on the actual work of reviewing films. It is divided into subgroups who meet according to schedule with a secretary from the office staff in the projection rooms of the various motion-picture companies to review the company's productions. After looking at the picture and discussing it as much as the picture may require, they fill out ballots which record their individual judgments as to selection and classification. The majority judgment goes out as the Board's report on the film.

The Review Committee is composed of men and women, of all ages and vocations, and represents an effort to create a cross section of public opinion. A probationary term of service is required of each prospective member, at the end of which the record is examined and the individual capabilities for review work scrutinized by the Membership Committee before election is recommended to the Executive Committee. Members are elected for a period of six months, and for every six months thereafter as long as their interest and attendance at review meetings is maintained and their ability is up to the requirements of the work. The monthly average of attendance is about twelve members a meeting.

5. The Committee on Exceptional Photoplays, a group of critics and students of the motion picture, whose professional or private interest is primarily in the motion picture as a form of art. This

Committee meets at least once a week to look at films recommended to them for unusual qualities and contributes critical discussions of outstanding films to the Exceptional Photoplays Department of the *National Board of Review Magazine*.

In addition to its critical work, this Committee occasionally sponsors private showings of out-of-the-ordinary films to invited audiences, and through assisting community groups to show such films in schools, clubs, or in local theaters, through coöperation with their exhibitors, tries to increase general appreciation of the aesthetic aspects of the motion picture. It is the pioneer group in this kind of work, and the originator of the Little Photoplay Theatre idea, its activity dating back to 1917.

The basic work of the National Board, insofar as the popular entertainment films are concerned, is the review of motion pictures intended for distribution to the public of the United States, which are submitted by the film companies before they are released to the country at large. This does not include newsreels, strictly scenic and educational subjects, and industrial films. This review work is a conscientious attempt to reflect the attitude of the national mind as to what are the most desirable pictures. Regarding the passing of pictures, "Passed by the National Board of Review" does not necessarily mean that the Board approves or recommends the picture on which that legend appears. In all cases it means that in the opinion of the reviewing committee the picture will not have a subversive effect upon large numbers of persons in different sections of the country, nor be subversive of the obscenity laws. The Board's opinion is that police laws, when invoked, constitute the public's protection. The Board's legend further means that the reviewing committee in so passing a film has detected in it, judging in a commonsense way by its probable net moral effect on an audience in a motion-picture theater, nothing that violates in part or in whole what amounts to the common law against the publication of the immoral, obscene, or what is detrimental to public morality.

The important part of the reviewing committee's work is now

that of selection and classification, and the legend of the National Board to appear on films has been changed to "Classified and Passed by the National Board of Review."

Censoring—demanding that cuts or changes be made in a film—has been abandoned by the Board entirely. Occasionally, out of its long experience in the study of the psychological reactions of motion-picture audiences to what they see and its careful research into the facts regarding what can surely be considered unsafe and illadvised in films intended for public showing, the Board sometimes offers its advice to producers, in a purely extra-editorial way. A constant reference to what the Board has learned about public opinion is kept in mind in its reviewing of films, remembering always the great problem that makes censorship so impracticable, that problem which arises out of the established, ascertained differences of reaction between individuals, groups, communities, and even whole sections of the country regarding screen entertainment.

The object in reviewing films is to get a representative group opinion on each film reviewed. When a committee is in doubt about whether its decision is a fair and proper one, or when any film that may be seriously questioned is shown, that particular picture is passed on to a second, sometimes a third, or fourth group, with a report from each preceding committee to the next, until a just, carefully defined group opinion is reached. A secretary who believes that a particular committee has made a decision contrary to the principles of the review work or beyond the proper scope of the Board's action may appeal the film under consideration to a second group or to the General Committee, which acts as the final committee of appeal. Any member of the minority of any committee, acting to the best of his or her convictions for the same reasons, has a similar privilege. There is never any attempt to coerce an individual's opinion.

Selections are made by considering four values in a film, the entertainment value, the artistic value, the instructional value, and the ethical value. If the entertainment value is found to be good and none of the others poor, the picture is selected. If the entertainment value is excellent, above that of the average selected picture, the film is given a star. Classification is made according to the audience for which the picture is considered suitable—and by suitable is also meant enjoyable. The mature audience includes people of adult minds, generally speaking all over eighteen years of age, though age limitations have to be allowed plenty of individual exceptions. The family audience includes practically all ages, since parents often take quite young children to the "movies" with them, but for rough classification people twelve years old and up are taken to be the family audience. Pictures selected for juvenile audiences are those which children, for particular reasons, are likely to enjoy.

In addition to their selections and classifications, the Review Committee also recommends any pictures that seem suitable for special uses: for schools or libraries, for their cultural or instructional values, for church use, and for the list of films worth keeping permanently available. Pictures with unusual qualities are recommended to the Committee on Exceptional Photoplays.

The individual ballots made out by review members on every picture are kept on file at the office of the Board and constitute the data on the basis of which all information about films is sent out.

The National Board is the pioneer organization in collecting and distributing this sort of information, representing a trained group opinion, prior to the national release of films. This information appears in the Weekly Official Bulletin, a Weekly Guide to Selected Pictures, and monthly in the National Board of Review Magazine. The National Board's lists afford a source to which any individual or group or public official can go for authoritative information regarding both old and current motion pictures of all descriptions and suitable for all uses, such as special community showings and special programs for children. The fairness and wisdom of the Board's lists, as expressing and interpreting the mind of the American people on

the important subject of motion pictures, is continually testified to by the general sentiment, afterwards ascertained, of the great majority of the motion-picture public, when the pictures are released.

One of the most urgent problems connected with the motion picture, ever since any one recognized that there were any problems at all, has been the question of the influence of films on children. Many investigations have been made to determine what effect "movies" have on young children, some of them with legitimate claims to be called scientific research, others—equally claiming to be scientific obviously molded by biased opinions and a determination to prove some preconceived individual theory. Several years ago the National Board, realizing that adults are prone to let their conception of the juvenile mind be tinged by their own uncertainties and fears, decided to find out by studying children themselves just what the children were most interested in and most affected by in the motion pictures they saw. To this end, in the spring of 1931, the Junior Review Committee was organized, which has since grown into what is called the Young Reviewers Club. This group of boys and girls, ranging in age from eight to sixteen years, coming from public and private schools and community organizations in or near New York City and representing all sorts of homes and grades of society, has its own reviews where it looks at films and discusses them under the leadership of one of its own number, without dictation or direction from any older person. They first record their opinions on ballots similar to the ballots of the adult Review Committee, and then talk the film over. Free from any consciousness of adult supervision, which so often makes children attune their expressed opinions to what they think is expected of them, these discussions are remarkably frank and spontaneous. Usually the only adult present is the Board secretary who takes down in shorthand all the remarks made, and at the end of the meeting asks questions to bring out points that may not have been covered by the discussion.

This work, in addition to being an invaluable check for adults to

apply their own ideas of juvenile reactions, is of immense educational value in making increasingly larger numbers of young people critically conscious of what they see in motion pictures, and creating a larger future audience for the "movies" which will be more selectively discerning, more aware of the difference between good and poor, and more insistent in its demand for something worth while. The mere act of discussing among themselves awakens the critical faculty in children, and the Board has found that the sanity and intelligence of its Young Reviewers Club is on quite as high a level as that of any average group of adults. The critical faculty develops so rapidly that the Board has found it necessary to recruit new groups of children constantly, in order to keep the reactions naïve and unsophisticated. The Young Reviewers number about four hundred, representing around one hundred schools.

The Board's National Advisory Committee is composed of prominent citizens in various important cities of the country. This Committee functions as individuals who when called upon give the Board information as to local attitudes and trends regarding motion pictures. Its members act in a purely advisory capacity and are elected from among people who are in general agreement with the Board's point of view. Numerous persons in this group have been actively identified in the Board's working Committee in a routine

capacity.

The National Motion Picture Council is that group of leaders representing the widespread community interest in developing motion pictures toward all of their best uses recreationally and educationally. It represents the department of the National Board which has to do with carrying on its field program. It is in contact with and represents the local affiliated groups known by such names as "Motion Picture Councils," "Better Films Councils," "Better Films Committees," and "Motion Picture Study Clubs." It constitutes the national channels through which the work of the Board is spread north, east, south, and west. It represents a growth in successive

stages from the Board's early Committee on Children's Pictures and Programs, organized in June 1916, and the National Committee for Better Films, founded later in the same year. The local groups are composed of people who are interested and active in the attempt not only to keep good films from dying out through lack of sufficient appreciation but to increase the audiences and therefore the demand for better films. The motion picture, being a mass product, depends more than any other form of art on mass support, and can develop only through an organized effort to promote its development.

The various community councils in different parts of the country follow the plan initiated by the National Board in 1916 of gathering into their membership representatives of important local organizations—cultural, educational, religious, civic, recreational—so that they contain as many as possible of the progressive elements of leadership in the community. The objectives of such organizations

are:

To demonstrate through the education of public opinion the effectiveness of selection and classification, instead of censorship, as a means of forwarding the development of the motion picture and its best uses

To encourage through open meetings, forums, classes, and other means the study of the motion picture as a medium of entertainment, education,

and artistic expression

To concentrate the attention of the public on specific worth-while films through the publication of a *Photoplay Guide* to the selected pictures

being currently shown at local theaters

To arrange family Friday night or week-end programs of selected films, and junior matinees of pictures particularly suited to the tastes of children, through coöperation with local exhibitors

To endorse and further the use of visual education through motion

pictures in the schools

To arrange and promote occasional exhibitions of exceptional and cultural films that would not ordinarily be shown in the commercial theaters.

The National Motion Picture Council numbers among its New York and field members educators, ministers, and officials of various social, cultural, recreational, civic, patriotic, and other organizations, most of them national. The Council is composed of fifty-two councilors residing in various States, affiliated community councils, coöperating and associate members in every State, with correspondents in all States and countries. Associate and coöperating duespaying memberships are open to any individual or group whose purpose and methods are similar to those of the National Board.

Thus the purpose of the National Motion Picture Council is to serve as a general clearing house on information regarding local community activities dealing with motion pictures.

The information service of the Board, conveying to the public the results of the critical or review service, is offered through its various publications as follows:

The National Board of Review Magazine includes articles on varied phases of motion-picture activity and interest, and information regarding the Board's work. In addition to the general articles there are the following departments: Exceptional Photoplays, Selected Pictures Guide, Better Films Forum.

The Weekly Guide to Selected Pictures is compiled each Friday. It gives current information in the form of short reviews and audience classification on the pictures selected by the Review Committees each week.

The Weekly Official Bulletin is a list of pictures passed by the Board and is of especial interest to city officials, but exhibitors and better-films groups also find it helpful.

Aside from the above mentioned regular publications the Board issues several special catalogues and lists, and special film lists such as Educational Films, Music Films, Foreign Films, Junior Matinee Films, Selected Book-Films, Exceptional Photoplays, etc.

For many years now the National Board and its affiliated groups have held annual conferences in New York City. The purpose has been to develop constructive thought about the motion picture as a means of social usefulness. It has been the hope of the National Board that through these conferences interested groups and individuals could be brought together to amalgamate intelligent opinion about films, so as to help onward a liberal social program which will defend the rights of the screen as a medium of ideas and intelligence in all the possible facets of its expression.

The National Board was not created by the motion-picture industry, is not and never has been controlled by the motion-picture industry, and is distinct in its operation and the conduct of its financial affairs from any organization which at any time has been created by, or has acted for, the industry. On the other hand, the Board has always been willing to coöperate with any agency in or outside of the motion-picture industry which holds out possibilities for the proper furtherance of its work and aims; namely, those entailed in bringing help, encouragement, and, wherever possible, guidance to the motion picture in developing its possibilities and achieving its future as a great medium of expression.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>a</sup> An account of the history and philosophy of the National Board of Review may be found in a pamphlet called "The National Board of Review—Its Background, Growth and Present Status,"—available on request from the Board office, 70 Fifth Avenue, New York, N. Y.

## RESEARCH PROJECTS AND METHODS IN EDUCATIONAL SOCIOLOGY

In order that this section of The Journal may be of the greatest possible service, its readers are urged to send at once to the editor of this department titles—and where possible descriptions—of current research projects now in process in educational sociology and also those projects in fields of interest kindred to educational sociology. Correspondence upon proposed projects and methods will be welcomed.

#### HARVARD NEWSREEL STUDY

A committee of political scientists and psychologists at Harvard University are to conduct a study of propaganda in the newsreels under a grant from the Committee on Research in the Social Sciences. Professor Carl J. Freidrich of the political-science department is to be assisted by Richard L. Schanck and Douglass MacGregor of the department of psychology and E. P. Herring of the department of government. The joint program hopes to cover several different phases of the problem from special angles of social psychology, public opinion, public administration, et cetera.<sup>1</sup>

### WPA BIBLIOGRAPHICAL PROJECT ON THE CINEMA

An important bibliographical research project has been authorized by the Works Progress Administration as one of the Federal Writers' Projects and is proceeding under the direction of Harold Lefkovits who is being assisted by Dorothy Dannenberg and Philip Sterling. A complete bibliographical catalogue of all historical and current materials on the motion picture is being prepared and the most important articles and books are being abstracted for the use of students in this field.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Statement furnished through the courtesy of Dr. Richard L. Schanck of the department of psychology, Harvard University.

### **BOOK REVIEWS**

Movie Parade, by Paul Rotha. London: The Studio, Ltd., 1936, 142 pages.

Magnificently illustrated with reproductions of "stills" from notable films, Paul Rotha's book presents an interesting picture of the various types of motion pictures classified according to his own categories. The volume is composed mainly of illustrations designed to give the reader a graphic appreciation of typical outstanding films which have made motion-picture history in the various fields of motion-picture production. Since the author is mainly interested in the entertainment or theater-shown film, the major portion of his work deals with films of fiction and their various subcategories which he groups under adventure and melodrama, comedy, romance, historical and chronicle, fantasy, drama, and epic. There are a few paragraphs of printed text accompanying each group of pictures stating very briefly the artistic and historical significance of the illustrations. Under the title, Films of Fact, the author has a significant collection of material illustrating the newsreel and travel, instructional and documentary films, and he concludes his work with a discussion of avant-garde and trick films. The extensive presentation of pictures in this book is probably more effective in giving the reader a graphic appreciation of the development of the motion picture than the printed word alone, but, as Rotha admits himself, no still photographs can take the place of seeing the motion pictures because the essence and genius of the cinema is motion.

How to Write a Movie, by ARTHUR L. GALE. New York: E. Byrne Hackett, Brick Row Bookshop, Inc., 1936, 199 pages.

Arthur Gale, editor of *Movie Makers* magazine, has written an indispensable book for the amateur movie maker, and one which will be especially useful to the school photoplay club and its faculty adviser. The work is a handbook on movie planning, continuity and scenario writing, silent and sound, for amateur and nontheatrical movie makers—how to make a really entertaining amateur picture with theatrical smoothness and suavity, and yet film it with a minimum of effort.

Basic principles of film planning are outlined in simple terms for new movie makers and are illustrated with numerous examples of movie episodes of the sort that any amateur can record. A step-by-step discussion of more advanced treatment is given, and the use of all cinematic devices and effects available to individual cameramen is discussed and illustrated fully. The beginner will find this an easy, understandable introduction to film planning, written from his point of view. Movie makers with a background of experience are offered a clear analysis of the subtleties of film planning. Continuity principles, plot, and scenario writing for documentary pictures, industrials, publicity films, and photoplays are discussed thoroughly. Indispensable advice on how to plan a picture with a purpose is given.

Music and sound effects, obtained with turntable and records, are covered and, for the first time in book form, writing cue sheets and planning pictures for sound on film post synchronization or lecture presentation is discussed in detail for the amateur and the industrial movie maker. Simple methods of getting entertaining pictures with amateur sound cameras are offered and direct sound recording and lip synchronization are discussed from the planning and continuity viewpoint. How to write a talkie scenario is told and this is illustrated with sample talkie scripts.

A complete silent scenario, ready for amateur production, is included and a chapter is devoted to planning natural color movies. An up-to-date glossary of technical terms and a complete index accompany the text.

Theatre Collections in Libraries and Museums, by Rosamond Gilder And George Freedley. New York: Theatre Arts, Inc., 1936, 182 pages.

This volume is an international handbook describing the theater collections of the world's leading libraries. Just what is a theater collection is a question which may occur to many readers. The theater collection of the New York Public Library is discussed by Mr. Freedley, one of the authors of this interesting little book, elsewhere in this issue of The Journal. To put it briefly, a theater collection contains everything pertaining to the theater (and now the motion picture) which a library can save and catalogue. It includes books, catalogues, and bibliographies, scrapbooks, prompt-books, scripts, scenarios, prints, engravings, "stills," photographs, autographs, and a vast amount of "fugitive material" like playbills, programs, pressbooks, and clippings. The theater collection is in constant use not only by students of the cinema and the theatre, but also by the motion-picture industry and the dramatic profession as well.

The authors of this handbook have performed a real service both to the

stage and to the cinema by cataloguing the resources of the libraries and museums of the United States, Canada, Mexico, and South America as well as those of Europe and Asia. In addition, Mr. Freedley has included a valuable chapter on the care and preservation of fugitive material.

Romeo and Juliet, by WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE. (A motion-picture edition.) New York: Random House, 1936, 290 pages.

This motion-picture edition of Shakespeare's immortal tragedy is of especial interest in view of the exceptional photoplay which has been made from the classic drama. In addition to the standard Shakespeare text, the volume, handsomely illustrated with photographs from the screen play, presents the complete scenario version used in making the motion picture. According to William Strunk, Jr., professor of English, Cornell, literary adviser on the production, and author of the foreword to the volume, "The screen version of Romeo and Juliet aims primarily at being faithful to Shakespeare's conception of the story and doing justice to the poetic beauty of the play." In preparing the screen version four principles were agreed upon by the late Irving Thalberg, the producer, George Cukor, the director, and Talbot Jennings, the scenarist: "First, Shakespeare's dialogue must be retained. Second, all details—settings, costumes, properties, manners—must be harmonious and in accord with the period. Third, perfect clarity. This means restoring scenes customarily omitted on the stage and converting some of the narrated incidents into action. Fourth, full justice must be done to the poetic content . . . "

The volume is unusually interesting to the student of motion pictures because of the brief articles it contains by the leading actress and actors in the production and by a number of those who played an important part in preparing the script, the settings, and the costumes for the photoplay. The book will undoubtedly do a great deal to stimulate popular interest in Shakespeare's works and to motivate the academic study of the poet with the universal enthusiasm of the young for the motion picture.

